

Pesticides and You

Vol. 7, No.1
March, 1987

News From the National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides (NCAMP)

One in a Series of NCAMP "How-To's"

Using the Freedom of Information Act

What is the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)?

FOIA provides citizens with access to any written records of federal agencies. The law can be used to obtain information necessary for effective understanding of and action on pesticide issues.

How does FOIA work?

Anyone can make a FOIA request for any agency-held record which they "reasonably describe" including specific documents, internal memoranda, labeling in-

formation and health and safety data (no trade secret data, however).

A request must be made in writing to the Public Information Officer of the agency that has the desired information. If you are a non-profit organization or seeking information "in the public interest," ask that your fees be waived "pursuant to 5 U.S.C. Section 522" and explain your tax status.

Who can make a request under FOIA?

Anyone can receive data under FOIA although to receive manufacturer-supplied health and safety data from EPA, one must first sign a "non-multinational status form" pledging that you will not deliver the data to a multinational corporation.

Does FOIA apply to states?

No, but every state has some kind of similar law, often called an "Open Records Act," which can be used.

-- by Bill McNichol